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41 EAST 42ND STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017, 697-5100

FOR NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY

PROGRAM NEWSCENTER FOUR

STATION WNBC TV

DATE FEBRUARY 25, 1977 - 5:00PM

CITY NEW YORK

REPORT ON NEWARK - PART TWO

TOM SNYDER: Last night here Carl Stokes began a two-part report on Newark, New Jersey, a city that displays all the worst ills in the nation's urban crisis. Carl concludes his report tonight. Carl?

CARL STOKES: Tom. In our report we tried to determine what progress, if any, Newark has made under its first black mayor, Kenneth Gibson, who next year will complete eight years in office. Mayor Gibson took over from the corrupt regime of Hugh Addonizio, and during his two terms in office, he has demonstrated that his own personal honesty and integrity is beyond question.

But more than honesty alone is needed to tackle Newark's grievous problems of housing, disease, crime, drug addiction and education. And the citizens of Newark have been victimized by powerful forces beyond their control, including a raw deal on the city's air and seaports from the New York/New Jersey Port Authority.

Newark airport, along with the seaport, covers 2300 acres of land that belongs to the City of Newark. Twenty-eight years ago, the land was leased to the Port Authority for 50 years. The city surrendered control of its land to the Port Authority for a giveaway rental of \$1 million a year. If the land were still on the tax rolls, it would command roughly \$100 million a year, money that could help Newark relieve some of its social problems, the worst in the nation.

You have only to drive around Newark in the devastated area close to the heart of the city to realize how great are the city's needs for good housing and all the other amenities of decent living. And Newark has its own special problems with a population that arrives in the city only to drift away.

Stanley Winters, a professor at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, is a Newark historian.

STANLEY WINTERS: Many people do not realize that Newark is a people funnel -- a lot of people come in, and many go out. I'd say since the Second World War, there's been a 100% turnover in population.

STOKES: Well, what accounts for that?

WINTERS: There's the question of the image of the city. People may begin to feel, "Oh, you live in Newark," and they get itchy and say, "Well, I'm going to get out of here as soon as I can get a stake and pull up."

STOKES: What kind of image does Newark have?

WINTERS: Well, it's an image -- and I'm saying this is an image, and not necessarily the reality; I think the reality has changed. It's an image of a city where you're personally insecure on the streets, and not only in the evenings, where there is a legacy of racial hatred and polarization, where it's a city, you know, at the bottom -- at the bottom of the line -- and that there's no hope for it. It's just going to keep drifting along.

STOKES: Newark's minority youths, both black and Hispanic, keep drifting along. They badly need jobs when they leave school, but good jobs call for a good education. And good education is a major casualty in the city's decline.

Newark's school system is held by many educators to be the worst in the United States. A New Jersey State investigation has just found the Newark system is unsafe, unsanitary and loosely administered. And many of the young people who emerge from Newark's public schools are functional illiterates. Teachers say that in some schools sexual activity, drugs and alcohol, vandalism, theft and fighting are commonplace.

Of the 74,000 students in the system, 72% are black, 18% Puerto Rican, and 10% white. I visited the Roberto Clemente Annex Elementary School, which is in a converted warehouse. And the state is now investigating how the warehouse came to be rented to the city by two school board employees, who by June will have collected \$300,000 in rent in five years.

The 437 pupils at the school are 40% Hispanic, 40% black, and conditions are so bad that a state investigation named the Annex as one of 11 Newark schools that should be abandoned. After a belated inspection on February 1st, patchwork repairs have been made in the school, which had a leaking roof, large wooden beams that had begun to separate, and repairs were also made on the school's toilet facilities that were broken and evil smelling.

Louis Giordano is principal of Roberto Clemente Annex.

Why have you presided over a school for four years that is obviously dangerous to the health and safety of the children?

LOUIS GIORDANO: Well, I would disagree that it was dangerous to the health and safety of the children. There are some physical problems in the school that are being corrected.

STOKES: You don't consider holes in the floor of the classroom as being dangerous to the children?

GIORDANO: No, it did not present the danger to them. It could be a danger, but it wasn't.

STOKES: At the very least, it could serve as a place for them to trip. Isn't that correct?

GIORDANO: True.

STOKES: You wouldn't consider that kind of condition in your own home, would you?

GIORDANO: No.

STOKES: Who has been to blame for those conditions not having been corrected from December, 1973, to a month ago?

GIORDANO: You would have to ask someone at the Newark Board of Education that question.

STOKES: Do you blame the Newark Board of Education?

GIORDANO: No, I don't.

STOKES: Do you blame the landlords?

GIORDANO: Well, I think that we'd have to share the blame.

STOKES: How much do you blame yourself?

GIORDANO: Well, I am the principal of this school, and I guess I'm accountable for what happens here.

STOKES: Did Mayor Gibson ever know about these conditions here?

GIORDANO: I don't know. Mayor Gibson is the mayor of the city, and he would only know through a report from the Board of Education.

STOKES: Blame for the sorry condition of Newark's school system is placed squarely on Mayor Gibson and his school board by the president of the City Council, Earl Harris, an unannounced candidate for mayor.

EARL HARRIS: The superintendent of schools, Mr. Taylor, is paid a handsome sum of \$50,000 a year as chief executive of the schools. And the mayor appoints all nine members of the Board of Education, so if there's something wrong with our education system, regardless of what way you cut it, the trouble is in either the administration or the lack of competent people serving as members of the Board of Education.

STOKES: My experience has taught me that no mayor by himself is solely responsible for a city's failure. So Newark's city council must share the blame. Equally culpable is the city's business community, who contributed to the record unemployment by fleeing the city and those remaining having such a poor record in the hiring of minorities.

The most tragic thing is that the near future seems to hold little hope for Newark. Mayor Gibson is looking to the Federal Government for massive Federal aid in the areas of jobs, housing and education. But President Carter has made it clear that is not going to happen, at least not for the next two years. And no substantive help can be looked for from the State of New Jersey. For four years Governor Brendan Byrne has stumbled and bumbled his way through one state fiscal crisis after another.

So in the absence of massive financial aid and more enlightened governing, the human, social and physical deterioration of Newark will necessarily continue. It is a tragedy. In fact, it's a monument of a sort to America's middle class flight from the cities.